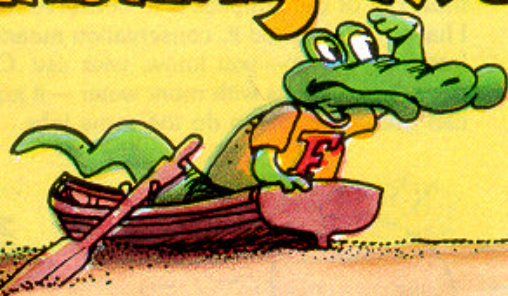


Finding More Water



You've already seen how scarce water can get here in South Florida. Here's something else to think about. We'll never have any more rain than what we've been getting over the years — an average of about 55 to 60 inches per year.

But, even though we can't make more rain, we can count on having more people. South Florida is growing at the rate of a million people about every 10 years. That's a lot of people who have to get by on the same amount of water. So we have to do all we can to stretch our supplies.

Here are a few things being done to make our water go farther.

Desalination



South Florida is surrounded on three sides by salty seawater. This stuff is wet, but the salt makes it no good for watering plants or drinking. But, there are ways to desalinate seawater, which means to take out the salt.

The best way we know of to desalinate water is through a process called reverse osmosis (they call it R.O. for short). This method uses complicated equipment in which high pressure is used to force water through a thin membrane, leaving the salt behind.

Because it takes a lot of electrical power to make reverse osmosis work, it is a very expensive way to produce drinkable water. If you're using R.O. for your water supply, you're going to pay a lot more per gallon than you would if you could get well water. But R.O. works, and if it's the only way to get the water you need, it's better than going dry.

Reclamation



Here's another way we can use to find "more" water. Reclamation means cleaning up water that we've already used, then using it again. Another word for reclamation is reuse.

Reuse is found in cities with wastewater treatment plants, because the wastewater is what we reuse. What they do is to treat the wastewater to a very high level, so that it is clear and even cleaner than when it comes from normal treatment plants.

This highly treated water is being reused more and more for such things as watering grass and plants in parks, golf courses and along highways. Some farms are reusing their own water for growing crops, and certain kinds of factories reuse water in manufacturing. Some cities in South Florida are starting to supply reused water to homes for watering yards.

By reusing water for certain purposes, we are able to use more of our freshwater supplies for cooking, drinking, hospitals and other places where the really clean stuff is needed.